

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

1-15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) A semiconductor laser device formed on a tilted substrate composed of a compound semiconductor, comprising an active layer and two cladding layers interposing the active layer therebetween,

wherein one of the cladding layers forms a mesa-shaped ridge,

the ridge includes a first region where a width of a bottom portion of the ridge is substantially constant along an optical path direction, and a second region where the width of the bottom portion of the ridge is varied continuously in the optical path direction,

the second region is placed between the first region and an end face in an optical path,

the width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the second region is increased with distance from the first region, and

a length of the first region is 10% to 50% with respect to a resonator length.

17. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 16,

wherein the width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the first region is in a range of 1.8  $\mu\text{m}$  to 2.5  $\mu\text{m}$ ,

the width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the second region is in a range of 2.4  $\mu\text{m}$  to 3  $\mu\text{m}$ , and

the resonator length is in a range of 800  $\mu\text{m}$  to 1500  $\mu\text{m}$ .

18. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 17,

wherein the length of the first region is 10% to 20% with respect to the resonator length.

19. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 17,  
wherein the length of the first region is 100  $\mu\text{m}$  or more, and  
the resonator length is in a range of 800  $\mu\text{m}$  to 1200  $\mu\text{m}$ .
20. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 17,  
wherein a differential resistance  $R_s$  in current voltage characteristics is 6.5  $\Omega$   
or less.
21. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 16,  
wherein the width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the first region is in a  
range of 1.8  $\mu\text{m}$  to 2.5  $\mu\text{m}$ ,  
a difference between the width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the first  
region and maximum value of the width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the  
second region is 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  or less, and  
the resonator length is in a range of 800  $\mu\text{m}$  to 1500  $\mu\text{m}$ .
22. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 16,  
wherein the second region is placed between the first region and one end  
face in the optical path, and between the first region and the other end face in the  
optical path.
23. (New) The semiconductor laser device according to claim 16,  
wherein at a boundary between the first region and the second region, the  
width of the bottom portion of the ridge in the first region is substantially the same  
as that in the second region.
24. (New) An optical pickup apparatus, comprising a semiconductor laser  
device as claimed in claim 16 and a light-receiving portion for receiving light output  
from the semiconductor laser device and reflected from a recording medium.

25. (New) The optical pickup apparatus according to claim 24, further comprising a light-splitting portion for splitting the reflected light, wherein the light-receiving portion receives the reflected light split by the light-splitting portion.

26. (New) The optical pickup apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the semiconductor laser device and the light-receiving portion are formed on the same substrate.

27. (New) The optical pickup apparatus according to claim 26, further comprising an optical element, wherein the optical element reflects light output from the semiconductor laser device in a direction normal to a principal plane of the substrate.

28. (New) The optical pickup apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the optical element is a reflection mirror.